

## **Statement by Hon. Christopher H. Smith**

The Subcommittee will come to order, and good morning to everyone.

Today's hearing is a joint hearing of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations, and the Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight.

Yet again, we need to bring to the attention of Members of Congress, of the American people, and the world community, China's continuing refusal to adhere to the standards of the civilized world. The current Chinese regime is one of the worst violators of human rights in the world. Human rights and religious freedom are brutally suppressed by the People's Republic of China. Forced abortions and labor camps are current realities, not historical relics. Brave Chinese who dare to stand up for their faith or political beliefs, or to defend their ethnic and cultural heritage, are subject to imprisonment and sometimes even to execution.

Christians, Tibetan Buddhists, and Muslim Uighurs are all being persecuted for their faith. The suffering of peaceful Falun Gong practitioners, however, has been especially intense. This July 20 marked the sixth anniversary of China's brutal campaign to completely eradicate Falun Gong through whatever means necessary. Falun Gong practitioners had begun to outnumber Communist Party members. Like all dictators and totalitarian terror systems, the PRC fears and hates what it cannot control. So it decided to destroy and intimidate those who practice Falun Gong.

Falun Gong is not a religion, per se, but rather more like a philosophy. Based on the principles of Truthfulness, Compassion, and Tolerance, Falun Gong uses a series of five physical and mental exercises to assist its members purify themselves spiritually and peacefully resolve conflicts. Whatever one may say about the merits of their beliefs, the evidence is very clear that Falun Gong practitioners are peaceful individuals who want to be left alone to practice their beliefs as they see fit.

The State Department Human Rights Report for 2004 documents at length the plight of the Falun Gong. We see before us a Stalinist nightmare revived for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – hundreds, perhaps thousands, dead as a result of torture; tens of thousands jailed without trial, held in labor camps, prisons, and mental hospitals, where they are forced to endure torture brainwashing

sessions. The Report indicated that Falun Gong adherents and other political prisoners sent to mental health institutions have been administered psychiatric drugs and electric shock treatments by Chinese authorities.

Last March, Premier Wen Jiabao emphasized that the Government would "expand and deepen its battle against cults," including Falun Gong. All reports indicate that he has been true to his word, and that China's Human Rights situation has worsened.

But Beijing is not confining its disgusting torture and brainwashing campaign to its own people. Chinese-American citizens and permanent residents are also victims. One American citizen, Dr. Charles Li, was arrested January 22, 2003 in China upon his arrival at an airport. A Falun Gong practitioner, the Chinese government alleges he attempted to sabotage television and radio equipment, even though he had just arrived in the country. Dr. Li has gone on continual hunger strikes to protest his arrest but been subject to forced feedings. There are reports that he is being subjected to brainwashing and anti-Falun Gong propaganda. He remains in forced labor. At least 37 other Falun Gong practitioners who have family members that are residing in the U.S. are also in prison in China. Authorities have also detained foreign Falun Gong practitioners from other countries.

Nor has Beijing confined its campaign against Falun Gong and other human rights activists to its own shores. Large numbers of Falun Gong in the United States have reported have reported harassment, including beatings and death threats, and we will hear about some of these today. Falun Gong members in America report that their relatives still in China are harassed as a means of pressure against those in America. The FBI is currently investigating beatings of Falun Gong practitioners in Atlanta and Chicago. On June 23, 2003, Falun Gong practitioners in New York were harassed and physically violated by Chinese nationals associated with the consulate. Charges have been filed with the authorities.

In March Beijing finally released the renowned human rights activist, Rebiya Kadeer, from prison, where she had been held for years on trumped up charges for defending the rights of her fellow Uighur Muslims in China. We had hoped this signaled some sort of genuine improvement in Beijing's treatment of human rights, but now we know better: since Rebiya, who is now living in America, has continued to campaign for the recognition of the legitimate rights of her fellow Uighurs, her relatives and business associates

still in China are being subjected to renewed harassment by the authorities. Rebiya could not be here today, but without objection I would like to submit for the record a letter she wrote to Congress.

Chinese consular and other government officials in the United States have pressured local American government officials, local American businessman, hotels, and perhaps worst of all, journalists and other media representatives, both of Chinese and non-Chinese origin, to cancel Falun Gong events, or not advertise in or do business with organizations allegedly linked to or supporting Falun Gong. The FBI has submitted a short document confirming that such activities by Chinese officials have taken place, and without objection, the following document will be submitted for the record. They appear to be especially active in pressuring local Chinese-American organizations to freeze out any organization, such as Falun Gong, they consider hostile to Chinese government interests. They have undertaken parallel activities in other countries, such as Australia, as well.

The only parallel I can make to these activities is to those of the infamous Nazi *Bund* in the 1930's, where a hostile, totalitarian police state tried to export its tactics to a free society and manipulate, terrorize and mislead an immigrant community to do its bidding. What is at stake here is not only the rights and dignity of Falun Gong practitioners and the Chinese people, but our own deeply cherished freedoms.

Our Administration witness today will be Ms. Gretchen Birkle, Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, which has been in the forefront of keeping world attention focused on China's miserable human rights record. Our second panel will include Mr. Chen Yonglin, a former Chinese diplomat; Mr. Shiyu Zhou, Vice President, New Tang Dynasty Television; Mr. Stephen Gregory, Chairman of the Board, English-Language Division of *The Epoch Times*, Chicago, Illinois; and Ms. Mickey Spiegel, China and Tibet Expert, Human Rights Watch.